The Rain Makers

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THE RAIN MAKERS

Ick-tomi was busy painting pictures on the mountain that stood high above Summerland, home of the Zuni Indians. Everyday it was growing more colorful. Usually he felt peaceful there, but this was the day before the Harvest Ceremony and he had to rush to finish the mountain for the celebration.

"You'll never make it," criticized the watchful raven. The ravens built their nests on the mountain and wanted to keep it beautiful. They had called it "Painted Mountain" as long as Ick-to-mi could remember.

The raven was afraid Ick-to-mi would get sloppy in his work so he perched himself up on a nearby tree and repeated: " You'll never make it. It's such a big mountain. If the rains come before the paintings dry, then what?" Ick-to-mi looked up to the sky and wondered about the rains. He felt his throat parched. The raven interrupted his thoughts. " You'll never make it, I tell you."

Ick-to-mi thought the raven was getting very bossy. After all, he was doing the best he could.

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Everytime Ick-to-mi had to change from red paint to blue he had to go up and down a long ladder. Finally he said to the Raven, "I'm getting tired, why don't you help instead of bossing all the time?"

The raven blinked his eyes and looked a little startled, " Me? What can I do? I'm not an artist. I can't paint pictures on the mountainside."

" You could carry several buckets of paint on that long bill of yours. Then I wouldn't have to climb up and down all day, "blurted Ick-to-mi.

The raven decided that if the paintings were to be finished maybe he'd better help Ick-to-mi. Ick-to-mi was pleased and ran down the long ladder. He got the four buckets of paint: red, blue, yellow and PURPLE green. The raven flew down to the ground by Ick-to-mi and sat with his mouth open while Ick-to-mi hung one bucket after another on the raven's bill. The bill made a perfect holder. It was a sight to see all the buckets lined up one by one in the raven's mouth. The raven flew up to the top of the ladder and waited for Ick-to-mi to paint. When the paint was gone, he flapped down for more. This was good team work and they accomplished alot in a short while.

Far in the valley below, the Zuni people were tending their crops. It was very hot and it had not rained for a long time. The people of Summerland were getting worried about the drought. Everyone was asking, "Will it rain tonite? Do you think that's a rain cloud? Have the gods forgotten us? Are they angry? Should we pray?"

The frog, an especially hard hit victim, wanted action. He leaped on a stool and lectured on The Sincerity of Prayer but no one believed him; they had heard it before.

Hano and Juno of the Zuni tribe stopped by the frog's pedestal. "It's just Old Croaky again," said Juno. He sat down beside the little dry ditch that fed their garden.

" We had better keep on working, " said Hano, " and get this ditch deep enough to take care of the rain when it comes."

" Do you think we are ever going to get rain?" asked Juno. "It seems to me that the Rain Maker ought to send rain when Mother Earth is begging for it. Look at those big cracks in the river bed. The flowers have all been pouting and sulking for a long time. If I could get hold of the thunderstone and the lightning stick, I'll bet I could make rain," said Juno.

" Since when are you a rain maker?" asked Hano suspiciously.

" Oh, I think I could figure it out once I got the tools, " Juno assured him.

" But how are we going to get them?" wondered Hano. " We can't climb up there.

" Ick-to-mi." Juno remembered. " I heard he's up on the "Painted Mountain".

" He wouldn't get them for us, Hano. Maybe he'd tell the gods, but that's all. Anyway, he won't be back in time. That's a big mountain, and the Harvest Ceremony is tomorrow. He'll probably be working all day.

" Let us go and ask the eagle. He's wise," said Juno. " He will be able to help us."

They found the eagle by the dried river bed. He was looking for something to eat. He turned and saw the boys: " Why aren't you boys in the fields, tending the crops," he said .

" Everything is dying eagle. We came to ask you how to help bring rain to the valley."

" Only the Rain Maker can bring rain," answered the wise old eagle. He lives on top of Thunder Mountain. There, in a stone house, he keeps the thunderstone and lightning stick hanging on the wall. With these tools he makes the magic that brings rain."

" Why has he not brought rain?," asked Hano.

" If we could get the thunderstone and the lightning stick, I'll bet we could make rain," said Juno.

" The Rain Maker will bring rain in good time," said eagle, " and it is fortunate that the rocks on Thunder Mountain are too steep for little boys to climb. You can not meddle with the magic of the Rain Maker. Now, you two hurry back to your work, and with that word of advice, he flew away.

But, Hano and Juno were still worried about the crops, and they were determined to try to bring rain. They hurried back to the valley, thinking about

the thunderstone and the lightning stick. "I am sure we could make them work," said Juno.

" Oh sure. We could figure it out all right once we got them," Hano replied, although he really wasn't certain. " But who can get them for us?" Then, suddenly both of them screamed at once, " Many Legs!" Many Legs was not a popular fellow, but he could be easily flattered to do favors for anybody. The boys were happy now as they ran to find the centipede. They searched everywhere, under rocks, in the caves, and in the cracks and crevices. Finally, under a big rock, they found him fast asleep and snoring loudly. His head was covered with nine or ten of his legs and arms. " Wake up! Wake up!" they screamed, tugging at his legs and tickling his ribs. Finally the old centipede stirred. He grumbled and muttered as he tried to go back to sleep. He was angry for being disturbed from his siesta, but when he picked his head up, shaded his eyes from the bright sunlight, and saw his two Indian friends, he became more polite. He yawned, brushed the sleep from his eyes, stretched his legs and crawled out to greet them.

" You lazy old man!" yelled the boys. Many legs ignored the insult.

" I'm glad to see you," he said with a yawn, "Why did you pick the hottest day of the year to visit me?"

" We need you, Many-Legs," Hano urged. We will lose our crops if we don't have rain. Won't you please climb up Thunder Mountain and get the thunderstone and lightning stick? We need the tools to make rain."

Old Many Legs thought a minute. " That's a dangerous assignment," he said so that the boys would realize his bravery. " It takes a fearless character to do it."

" Oh, all right," he finally said. " I'll do it. But what about Rain Maker?" Hano and Juno felt a chill.

" We have to think first of our crops," they said. " I am the only one who can climb Thunder Mountain," thought Many-Legs liking the hero's role. " Now, if you'll kindly help me with my shoes I'll be off."

The children hurried to the big pile of shoes and they began putting them on the centipede as fast as they could. First a left and then a right. A left and a right. Sometimes they would make a mistake; they were in such a hurry and afraid that Many Legs would change his mind. Soon all the hundred shoes were on and laced.

Hano and Juno hurried to the foot of Thunder Mountain and watched as Many Legs tripped over his many shoes and climbed quickly up the mountain.

" I hope he dosen't slip and fall," said Juno.

" Oh, don't worry," answered Hano. " He has so many legs that if one slips, he can catch hold with another and another and another."

Old Many Legs climbed higher and higher up the mountain. As the boys watched him, he got smaller and smaller until he finally disappeared over the mountain. The boys waited for a long time. Hano fell asleep and dreamed of rain. He woke up with a start. There, coming over the ridge, was Many Legs with the thunderstone and lightning stick. The boys ran toward him, dancing and singing.

" Whew, what a climb. Well, here they are and what a time I had getting them. Just after I started...." Many Legs found that he was talking to himself. The boys were racing toward the river. Many Legs sat down with a sigh. " Boy, my feet are killing me, I think I need a nap." He crawled off to sleep again, happy and proud of his deed.

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The boys took the magic tools to the bend of the river bed and waited. Nothing happened.

" Now what will we do?" wondered Juno as he looked at the beautiful red and blue stone. It was very hard and heavy to carry. They waved it in the air, spoke to it, rubbed it, and rubbed it until they were exhausted. But not a sound came from the stone.

Hano, with his brilliant, gleaming lightning stick, tried to start it

by rubbing it and shaking it. " Do something," he yelled, "Will you?" But there were no flashes. " We must be doing something wrong."

Hano looked sadly at the stick in his hand. " We can't make rain." Then, furious, he thrust the stick with all his strength onto the ground. At once, the lightning flashed. Juno was frightened at the sudden and terrible sight. The stone flew from his hand and sailed through the air. It struck the ground and began to rumble and roar. The lightning stick kept on flashing and sparking. The roar of the stone became louder and louder. It began to rain! The boys danced round and round for joy. They splashed the cool rain over their faces, their hair, and their bodies.

" The Rain Gods are rejoicing," they sang. The rain poured down faster and faster, and soon the river flowed again and the ditches filled with water. The thirsty fields soaked up the water like sponges. The people of the valley cried with joy. The thunder stone and the lightning stick were making more and more rain, faster and faster. The river swelled and raged.

"How are we going to stop the rain?" cried Juno. " Look at the river running over, and the ditches, too. The valley will be flooded!"

" I don't know," shouted Hano. " What can we do?" He tried to find the thunderstone but the rain had ~~washed~~ ROLLED it away. The lightning stick was too hot to touch. Hano heard the crash of the thunder and tasted his fear.

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Many Legs was jolted from his sleep by the rushing water. He saw the water covering the fields. He tried to run as fast as his many legs would take him toward the mountain. But the water grew too deep.

" The boys have gone too far," he shouted. " That's too much rain!" I can't swim," he called to the ducks who were sailing down the ditches and riding up the roller coster waves. They could not remember a wonderful time like this.

Prairie dogs, homeless now, took to the high places, crying as they left. The birds took to the highest trees. The frog threw out his chest with pride, sure that his prayers had been answered. He kept quoting lines from The Sincerity of Prayer. The coyote snarled and vowed he'd get even for this with somebody, anybody, it didn't matter who.

Many Legs scrambled toward the mountain, screaming as loudly as he could and coughing water out of his lungs.

"ICK-TO- MI!"

Ick-to-mi was shocked and angry to see all his hard work washing down the mountain. All his beautiful colors streamed down the river. He heard Many Legs calling and he knew that he'd have to be swift. He muttered the words of magic that he learned for times of emergency. Soon he was covered with feathers. He took to the sky and landed near Many Legs.

Many Legs was too exhausted to make sense. As he bailed the water out of his shoes, he told Ick-to-mi his side of the story. He begged Ick-to-mi to go to Father Sky and tell him where the boys were making rain. Ick-to-mi sailed into the wind and flew up the valley by the river. He seized the thunderstone and the lightning stick and took them back to the mountain where they belonged. When he reached Thunder Mountain, he went to the stone house, home of the Rain Maker and knocked at the door, but no one answered.

" I wonder where they are," he thought. He knocked again, but there was no response.

" Well, I'll just slip in and put these tools back. I'm not going to explain about the flood," he thought. So quietly, he tip-toed in looked around, and there was a big red sheet of paper hanging from the roof with a hastily written note on it. Ick-to-mi read: "Emergency.....Gone to Mars....Be Back Soon...." It was signed by the Rain Maker.

" Oh, so that's it. I wonder what's going on up there," he thought. " That explains why there was no rain. I had better go back and tell every one

so they won't punish Hano and Juno for causing the flood. He quickly went to the closets marked Sun, Moon and Stars. The doors marked Thunderstone and Lightning stick were left open and empty, just like Many Legs had left them in a hurry not to get caught. He put the magic tools in their proper places. The rain suddenly stopped. The sun came out, smiling.

"The flowers," said the Sun,"will need help most. The rest of the people will just have to do the best they can."

As Ick-To-Mi came over the top of Thunder Mountain, he wondered what was going on on Mars. The Harvest Ceremony was just beginning. He knew the boys had been forgiven. In the distance, he heard the drums.